

NEWTON YOUTH COMMISSION Meeting
November 2, 2011 MINUTES
Location: Newton City Hall Cafeteria

Present: Joe De Vito Chair, Tony Bibbo, Chris Fortunato, Matt Green, Stephan Ross, Robert Staulo, Kirsten Tuohy
Staff: Ruth Hoshino
Guests: Tom Pomeroy, Deb Darcy
Students: Teekhon Davidoff, Jaya Forsythe, Princess Aajia Freeman, Nadine Geller, Jay Sobel

The meeting was opened at 7:03 PM and chaired by Joe De Vito
A vote to accept the minutes of October 5, 2011 was passed.

Treasurer's Report: The budget for FY 2012 operating budget is \$2500. The revolving account balance is \$986.12.

Payment made to e-CHUG for 487.50, 90.01 has been reimbursed for student meeting refreshments. A balance of \$1,922.49 remains. The Improbable Players will perform at Newton North in November and a bill of about \$700 is expected. The commission approved funds to be used to print business card style advertising for the e-CHUG program. This will be about \$150.

Business:

- Mayor's Public Service Internship Program Update –
The interns are discussing ideas about how to build on the recent Rachel's Challenge high school program. Rachel's Challenge is an interactive school program that motivates people to make positive changes in the way they treat others. It is the legacy of Rachel Scott, the first student killed in the Columbine School tragedy in 1999. Newton hosted a Rachel's Challenge community event on October 17th and student events on October 17 (North) and 18 (South).

Some may see the Newton schools as being "perfect" where everyone feels connected and everyone is happy – instances of bullying and feeling left out "couldn't happen here". This is not true.

The interns' ideas are:

- Share anonymous, written narratives about personal experiences of being a Newton student and posting them on walls around the high schools. – This could inspire students to come forward with their own story and to highlight some of the problems that are not known.
- Host an evening panel discussion (modeled after Two Schools – One Book) where teens speak and show classmates that there are others out there just like them.
- Create a website modeled after "*Six Billion Secrets*" where people share hopes, fears and dreams - and are treated in a non-judgmental way by a supportive community. This raised the question of how to respond if messages about suicide or homicide were posted. Could this cause a contagion effect? This will have to be thought about carefully.
- Ask all English teachers to give an assignment to student's to write their personal school experience narrative.

This project, whatever form it takes, will be consistent with the theme of "teen voices". This would take place toward the end of the school year and would require the approval of the Youth Commission and the administration of both high schools.

A teen conversation video is being worked on. A Kennedy School intern has been working with teens and two Boston College Law School Students are interested in becoming involved.

- Improbable Players

The Improbable Players (performance and discussion workshops about substance abuse prevention) will be performing at Newton North High School on Wednesday, November 30th from 9:05 – 10:20AM.

- Other Discussion

The topic of the status of the teen centers and service providers came up. It was suggested that teen service agencies be encouraged to send a representative to the monthly Youth Commission meetings. Ruth and Joe will work on getting the word out. The Bibbo Teen Center on Cherry Street has moved to NCSC's site at 492 Waltham Street in West Newton. It is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. The Chestnut Street Teen Center is currently open Tuesday – Saturday evenings. Brigham House is still operational but the demographic has shifted from high school students to middle school students and the user ship has decreased. It takes constant outreach to keep these centers going. The group would like to move forward – to take a look at what the needs are now and find a way to accomplish it.

The Health and Human Services Commissioner, Dr. Dori Zalezik, will be invited to attend the next meeting as she has been developing a plan for youth services in Newton.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM. **The next meeting is Wednesday, December 7, 2011 at 7 PM.**

Respectfully submitted by Ruth Hoshino